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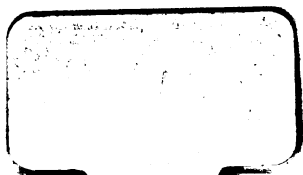
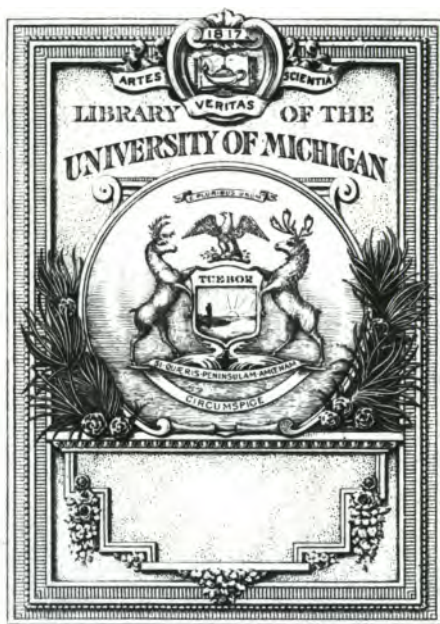
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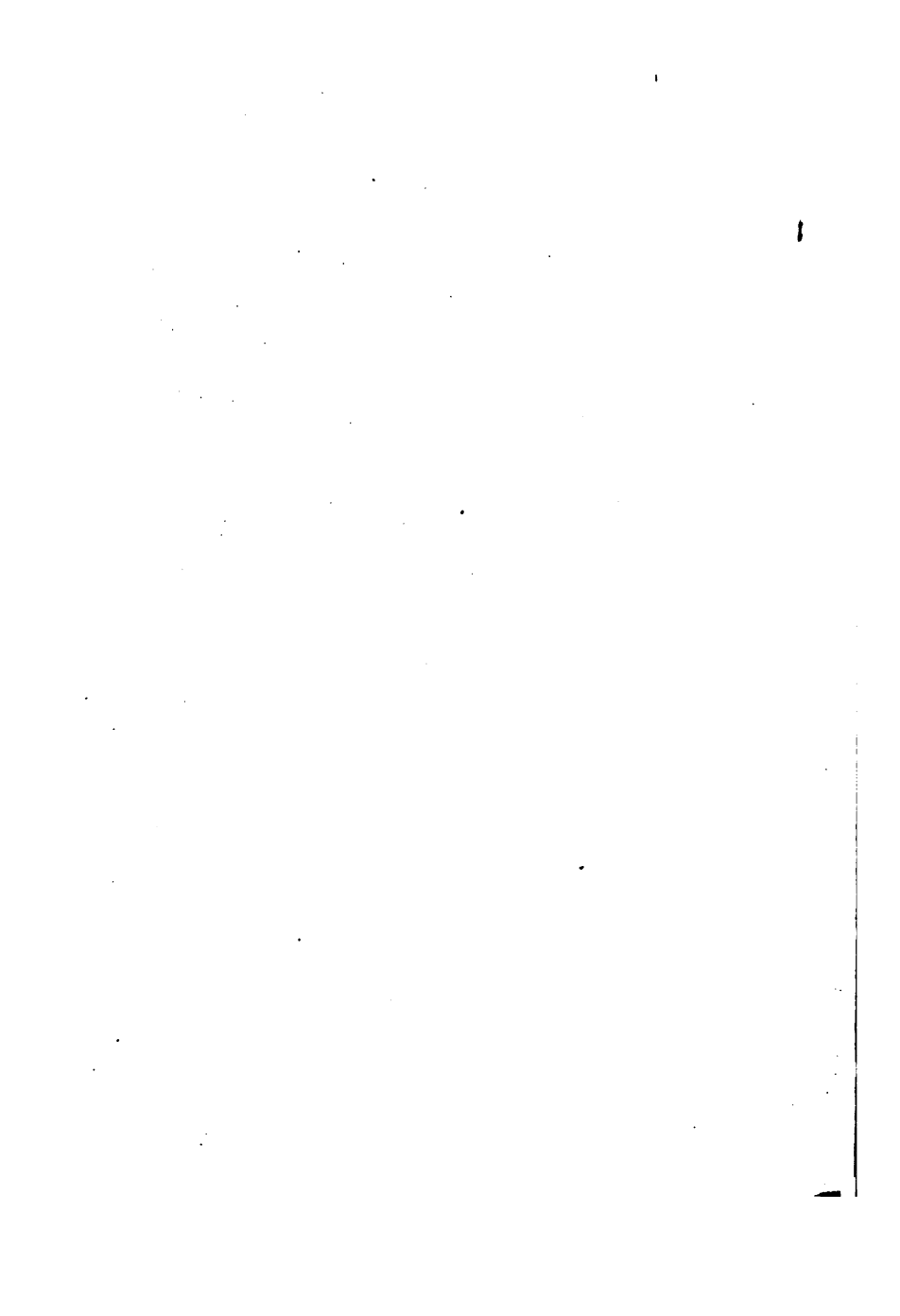
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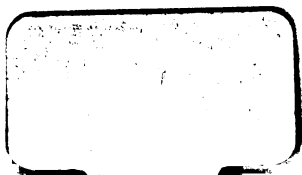
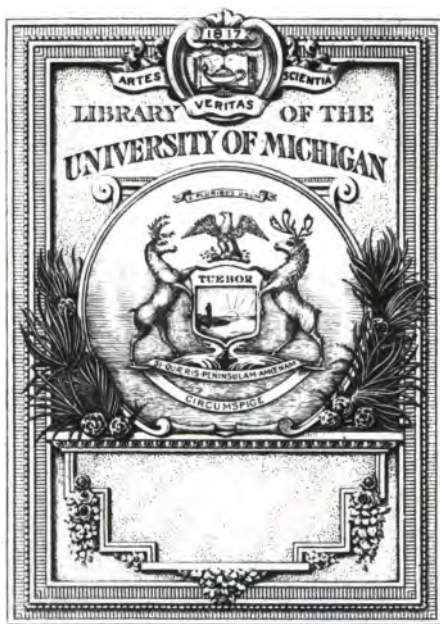
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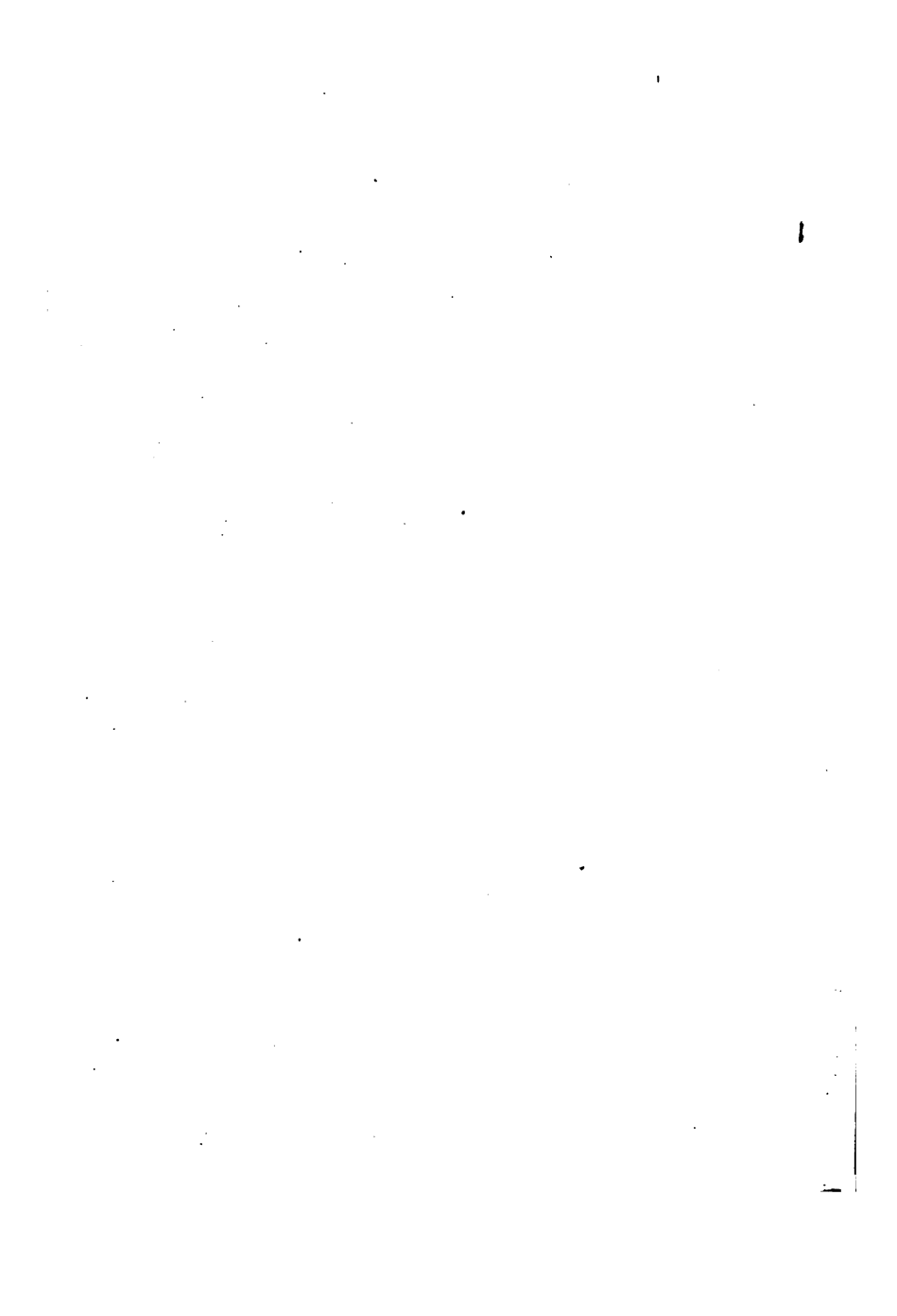
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A SHORT SKETCH

OF

MODERN PHILOSOPHIES

AND OF HIS OWN SYSTEM,

BY

ANTONIO ROSMINI-SERBATI.

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WITH A FEW WORDS OF INTRODUCTION

BY

FATHER LOCKHART.

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## A FEW WORDS OF INTRODUCTION.

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It often happens that I am asked to say in a few words what is the characteristic principle of the system of philosophy named after Rosmini, the venerated Founder of the Order to which I have the honour to belong.

The following Short Sketch of Modern Philosophies, written by Rosmini forty years ago, but only recently published in the Italian original, seems well suited to the above purpose. I commend it to all who wish to know what Rosmini's system is, but who have not time or inclination for studying it in his larger works ; or who perhaps have only heard Rosmini spoken of as one against whom much opposition has been raised by many Catholic writers, especially by Italian members of the Jesuit Order.

On this point it may be well to say a few words. Many accusations having been laid before the Holy See against Rosmini as a theologian and philosopher, Pope Pius IX., appointed, in 1850, a special Congregation to examine and report on his works. A most searching examination was instituted of more than three years duration, made by twenty-four Consultors of the Index, all bound under oath to study thoroughly all the inculpatated works, independently, without consultation with others, and in relation to the charges, more than three hundred in number, that had been

brought against them. In the month of June, 1854, Pius IX. presiding over the assembly of the Cardinals and Consultors of the Index, and having heard the all but unanimous verdict of acquittal, pronounced the following Decree : "All the works of Antonio Rosmini Serbati, concerning which investigation has recently been made, must be dismissed ;\* nor has this investigation resulted in anything whatever derogatory to the good name of the author, or to the praiseworthiness of life and singular merits before the Church of the Religious Society founded by him."† To this DECREE was added at the same time the following PRECEPT OF SILENCE, "That no new accusations and discords should arise and be disseminated in future, silence is now for the third time enjoined on both parties by command of his Holiness."‡

\* The Congregation of the Index is empowered by its constitutions to pronounce one of three sentences, "*pro merito*" (according to deserts), on works submitted to its examination—viz., *prohibeantur*, *corrigantur*, *dimittantur*, so that the sentence of *dimittantur* or *dismissal* is the most favourable sentence ever given, and means that nothing has been found in the works demanding *prohibition* or *correction*, but that the works are *dismissed* and left free to be read by the faithful.

† The Decree : *Antonii Rosmini-Serbati opera omnia de quibus novissime quæsitum est, esse dimittenda; nihil que prorsus susceptæ istiusmodi disquisitionis causæ auctoris nomini, nee Institutæ ab eo Religiosæ Societati de vitæ laudibus et singularibus in Ecclesiam promeritis esse direptum.*

‡ The Precept of Silence forbids the bringing up again the charges which had been dismissed after so searching an

Being myself in Rome in the early part of the year 1854, a little before the sentence of acquittal on Rosmini's works, I one day received a visit from the English Assistant of the General of the Jesuits, who informed me in the course of conversation that he had been sent expressly by the General to assure me, and through me the Superiors of our Institute, that the General wished it to be understood that "the opposition to our venerated Founder was not the work of the Society of Jesus, but of a School in the Society."

I have always treasured these words, because they assure me that the opposition on the part of those writers, which is as active as ever, notwithstanding the *Frcept of Silence*, is not to be understood as committing a venerable Order, for which I feel so high an esteem ; between which and ourselves I feel sure there will one day be a perfect harmony of views on the subject of philosophy, since we are agreed in taking S. Thomas as our master. We may differ with those writers in some of their interpretations of S. Thomas's meaning, but we both recognize in the Holy See an infallible umpire if ever it should declare any philosophical opinions to clash with any principles of Catholic Doctrine.

A few remarks on the fundamental principle of investigation. *Ne vel novæ in posterum accusationes ac dissidia, quoris demum obtentu suboriri ac disseminari possent, indictum est jam tertio de mandato Sanctissimi utrique parte silentium.*

Rosmini's philosophy may not be out of place. This concerns the origin of ideas in the human mind.

Now the preliminary difficulty in understanding the Rosminian philosophy is that it goes deeper than what are *popularly* assumed to be the first principles of human thought. It undertakes to *account for* ideas. But to many people it has never occurred that there is any difficulty in this matter requiring explanation. They have been used to assume with Locke and others, more or less of the same school, that the formation of ideas is so simple that it does not require to be accounted for. It is assumed to be a simple fact like sensation. They say, "We *have* sensations, and we *have* ideas; the sensations come first, and they are transformed into ideas by the faculty of reflection."

Those who talk thus are not aware that between *sensations* and *ideas* they have jumped a gulph which is not less than *infinite* !

This mental condition reminds me of a conversation once overheard in a railway carriage between two countrymen. "John," said the one, "how about this railway telegraph; how do they send messages by it?" "Oh," said the other, "it is very simple. You see them wires along the line. They runs from Lunnon to York. They are fastened to a thing at each end with a dial plate and hands to it like a clock, with letters all round, and when they turns the hands in Lunnon this 'n and

that 'n, the hands in York goes that 'n and this 'n." "Ah," said the other, "it seems very simple when you have it explained."

Much like this is the state of mind of those who do not see any difficulty in the formation of ideas, and serenely talk, as Locke and his school do, of "sensations being transformed into ideas by means of the faculty of reflection." They ignore the crucial point in philosophy,\* much like the countryman who explained the electric telegraph, omitting all mention of electricity—that occult and mysterious force which is behind the phenomena.

The fundamental principle of Rosmini's philosophy concerns, as I have said, the origin of ideas—how the *ideas* or *thoughts* of *things* arise in our mind. For, it is certain that whenever that modification of our sensitivity which we term a sensation takes place, we immediately and necessarily think, not of the sensation *within* us, but of a something *outside* of us to which we attribute *existence*, call it a *thing*, and credit it with being the *cause* of our sensations; so that we actually attribute to it the qualities of heat or cold, blackness, whiteness, or the like, which, when we reflect or think again, we know exist within our own sensitivity only.

\* Every *sensation* is *particular*; *reflection* simply reproduces the *particular*, *imagination* pictures it; but ideas are *universal*, and all involve the *idea* of existence which is the most universal of all. How do we get the *universal*?

This mental process is obviously a *judgment*, in which we predicate the *existence* of a *cause* of our sensation. To say nothing at present of the idea of *cause*; it is clear that we could not apply the predicate of *existence* unless we knew what *existence* is, that is to say, unless we had the idea of existence already in our mind. We have thus two modes of knowledge to be carefully distinguished from each other—knowledge by *judgment*, whereby we affirm the reality of individual things—knowledge by *intuition*, whereby we intellectually think pure ideas. With this fundamental distinction in view I now proceed to trace the origin and show the relative position of these two modes of thought. A little reflection will make it clear that the idea goes before the judgment, and is necessary for its formation.

We are said to know a thing when we apply to it the *idea* of *existence* or judge that it is an *existing thing*.

That which is *no thing* is unthinkable, for the object of thought—the idea of existence—is gone. And this shows that the idea of existence is the necessary object of thought, as S. Thomas says, "*Objectum intellectus est ens vel verum commune*" (S. Thom., S. I. 55. 1. c.). It is the first idea, without which we can form no judgment and know nothing. It is plain, therefore, that the idea of existence must be self-known (*per se nota*), otherwise we should be incapable of knowing it or of knowing anything. And this is the same as to

say that it must be the *first idea* and the *one innate idea* in the human mind.\*

But how does this idea of existence make its appearance in the mind?

Not as a product of the senses, for we are obliged to apply this idea on occasion of each sensation, in order to form that *idea* of the *thing* which necessarily arises in our mind on occasion of each sensation. In the following brief treatise Rosmini shows very clearly from the very nature of the idea

\* It does not account for the origin of the idea of *existence* in our minds to say we have in us a *faculty* endowed with the virtue of acquiring the idea of existence on occasion of the sensations. The question is, what is the nature of this faculty? For, in order that this faculty may be able to operate must it not be itself *in act*? Surely that which is not *in act*, does not exist, and therefore can not operate. For a faculty is nothing but a "first act" (*actus primus*) whence "second acts" (*actus secundi*), or what we commonly call "*acts*," may proceed. Now the *first act* of the *intellectual faculty*—the *act* by which this faculty exists—must in the very nature of things, be an *intellectual act*; else the faculty would not be *intellectual*; and if the act is intellectual it must consist in the *vision* or *intuition* of an *object*; because this is what is meant by an *intellectual act*. The very etymology of *intellectus* (derived from *intus legere*, to read within) shows this clearly. The act of *reading* necessarily implies the act of *seeing*; and there can be no *seeing* without something which *sees* and something which is *seen*; in other words, without the intelligent *subject*, and the *object* which this *subject* looks at and thus *understands*. The thing seen—the object present *ab initio* to the intelligent subject—the constitutive *form* of the human understanding (*vis intellectiva*), is *existence*, *being*, and this is the *light of reason*.

of existence, which is the *formal* part of all our ideas, why this idea can not come from the senses. He shows that the sensations are limited to the particular impression made on our *sensorium*, whereas ideas are unlimited, and can be applied *ad infinitum* to any number of beings, and to any number of the same genus and species.\* Now the idea of a thing is the same as the logical possibility of the thing. That which is possible was always possible, and is therefore eternal, and that which is eternal is divine, therefore Rosmini teaches that ideas are in a certain sense divine, *i.e.*, because they have divine characteristics.

The idea, therefore, is so totally distinct from the sensations, so immensely elevated above them, that it is absurd to suppose it to be the *product* of sensations, because no effect can rise higher than its source; although it is, at the same time, an obvious fact that the ideas are made known to us on *occasion* of the sensations. In a word the sensations furnish the *material* element, the innate idea of existence, the *formal* element, of all the ideas we form by aid of the senses.

If then the *idea of existence* is not a product of sensation, yet if on occasion of the sensations we

\* Rosmini makes the faculty and art of language, as taught to man by the tradition of human society, a chief factor in the formation of abstract ideas, for words are sensible signs of ideas, and stand as sensible representations of ideal things, enabling us to form *classes* of things in our mind—genera and species, which are all abstract ideas.



always find it in our mind, it is clear that we find there what was there before, which was never *formed* but which was *given from without*, by means of another faculty, that of intelligence, which, as Rosmini teaches, is endowed with the intuition of the idea of existence by God, in Whose Mind the idea of existence, and of all existences was from all eternity. This is expressed by S. Thomas when he says: "*Deus cognoscendo se cognoscit naturam universalis entis*" (C. G., I. 50).

And, indeed, this is self-evident if we believe in God as the infinitely intelligent Creator, willing and therefore knowing every particle of creation from all eternity.

These ideas of possible being in the mind of God are the types according to which He created all things, by an act of His free will, selecting out of all possible things such as He saw it was for the best to create. Thus an architect forms in his own mind the design which he intends to draw or to build, selecting also for good reasons, not always the thing most perfect in itself, but that which is best, all the circumstances being considered.

In like manner, regarding the communication of ideas; (to carry out the same analogy), the architect may if he pleases keep his idea to himself, or if he pleases he may communicate it or any portion of it to another mind, and then it becomes the thought or idea of that other; yet it would still be the original idea in essence, and the idea of the originator would always stand *objectively* to the

recipient, as something distinct from his own *subjectivity*.

Analogously to this we say that the idea of existence, and the ideas of existences, which we find in our mind, and which were elicited on occasion of the sensations, are the same that were originally in the mind of God, Who, seeing all creation, saw even the modes in which the forces of the universe would make themselves perceived by us, and be classed as *things, objects, or beings*.<sup>\*</sup> These ideas, Rosmini teaches, could come into our minds only by communication from God, through the intellectual faculty, or intuition of the idea of existence, which combines with the sensations that are perceived by us, in the unity of the identical human subject, which is at once *sensitive* and *intelligent*. Thus it is the identical *Ego or self* which feels and knows, which knows that it feels, and feels that it knows, and the result is the intellectual perception of objects, or the formation of ideas and the application of them.<sup>†</sup>

S. Thomas says: "*Esse in quantum est esse non potest esse diversum*" (C. G. 1. 52). The idea, therefore, of existence or of possible being in the mind of God is the same essence of being as the idea of existence in the mind of man. It must, therefore, be a

<sup>\*</sup> *Qui cognoscit perfecte naturam universalem, omnes modos cognoscit in quibus illa natura potest haberi* (S. Thom., C. Gentes, 1. 50, et *passim*).

<sup>†</sup> Rosmini teaches that there is a spiritual as well as a corporeal sense, and that the soul feels itself as it knows itself.

communication to man of some thing that considered in itself is Divine, since the ideas in God are His Divine substance. In God they are God. But if so, it is objected "to suppose man to be by nature in communication with the Divine substance is the error of the Ontologists and tends logically to Pantheism." Rosmini replies, in his answer to Gioberti, "that the human mind has only the intuition of a light which descends from God and which is, therefore, an *appurtenance* of God. Now every appurtenance of God is God, if we consider it as it is in God, but if we consider it *abstracting* from all the rest that makes the reality of God, it is an appurtenance of God, as the Divine Goodness and the Divine Wisdom are appurtenances of God but are not God Himself, for God is not Wisdom or Goodness only. Thus although in God there are no real distinctions except those of the three Divine Persons, God is able to distinguish *mentally* His *ideas* from His Divine *substance*; and as man likewise can abstract his ideas from himself and may impart his idea or a part of his idea to his fellow man without imparting his own substance, so God may abstract His ideas from Himself, and may communicate His ideas or some part of them, such as the idea of existence or being, without communicating to man His Own Divine substance. He may manifest His *idea* without manifesting His *Reality* or subsistence, and to the objection of Gioberti (that "this idea must be God, because everything is either God or a creature, but

the idea of *being* is not a creature seeing it has Divine characters, therefore it must be God”), Rosmini replies, “Every *real* being must be God or creature, but not so every *ideal* being. The idea of *being* abstracted from God’s reality is neither God nor creature, it is something *sui generis*, an *appurtenance of God*.”

The idea of existence is the *light* of the mind, according to the analogy with the material light, so that the light of reason is the name given universally to the informing constitutive principle of the intellectual faculty. For as it is by the material light that our eye is enlightened so as to receive the impressions of form and colour which aid us to distinguish one thing from another (and without this light the whole universe would remain for us perfectly dark); so the idea of existence is the *light of our mind*, by which we actually distinguish objects and know existences, on occasion of our eye being enlightened by the material light, or on receiving other sensitive impressions.

This *light of reason* is, according to Rosmini, what Philosophy, following the lines traced out by Aristotle, defines as the *LUMEN intellectus agentis*, and of which S. Thomas says that it is *participatio Luminis in nobis impressa, seu participatio Lucis æternæ*.

S. John tells us, *Deus erat Verbum . . . . erat Lux vera quæ illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum*—“The Word of God is the light

that enlighteneth every man coming into the world."

It is this "idea of existence" or "light of being" given to man which constitutes the *objectivity* of truth, as seen by the human mind. For truth is that which *is*, as falsehood is that which *is not*. It is this which makes man intelligent and gives him a moral law by which he sees the *beingness* or essence of things, and recognizes the duty of his own being, to act towards each being whether finite or infinite, creature or God, according to the beingness or essence of being which he beholds in the light of the truth of being.

Thus, according to Rosmini, is secured the objectiveness of truth; and the high rule of morality and religion is summed up in the grand sentence of Rosmini which he shows to be the *divine imperative* in the conscience of man, "*Riconoscere l'ente secondo la sua entità*"—"Recognize being according to the beingness that is in it." He shows, too, that this same principle of natural reason, when sublimated by Divine Grace, becomes the great principle of faith and charity, dictating to us the duty, and giving the power of loving God above all things and our neighbour as ourselves, inspiring the soul of man to perform deeds of supernatural self-sacrifice, arising from the intimate sense of the presence and love of God in the soul, and the conviction of the nothingness of all things, except as they give glory to God, by being used according to the infinitely perfect will of God, in which

He designed the universe, and which He causes man to know by the natural and supernatural light, and by the external manifestations of His Providence.

W. LOCKHART.

*S. Etheldreda's, September, 1882.*

# A SKETCH OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY

BY

ANTONIO ROSMINI SERBATI.

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## I. LOCKE (1632-1704).

Locke undertook to solve the problem of the origin of ideas. According to him all ideas are acquired by *sensation* aided by *reflection*.

By reflection he meant the labour of the reflective faculty of the human soul exercised upon the sensations. It follows that Locke denies to the mind every innate idea.

By innate ideas we mean ideas or cognitions which man has in his mind by nature.

## II. CONDILLAC (1715-1780).

The philosophy of Locke was propagated in France by Condillac with certain modifications of his own.

Condillac professed to have simplified the ideological system of Locke by his suppression of *reflection*, which he held to be nothing more than sensation.

He thus reduced all human cognitions to sensation only. He held, therefore, that man possessed one only faculty—namely, the faculty of

sensation. Memory, imagination, intelligence, and reason were only different modes of sensation.

This system was most pernicious in its consequences as well in regard of morals as of religion. For, if man has no faculty but that of *sensation*, it follows that good and evil are nothing more than agreeable or disagreeable sensations. Thus morality would consist in procuring for ourselves pleasant sensations, and in avoiding those which are unpleasing.

This immoral system was developed in France by Helvetius (1713-1771), and Bentham (1748-1832), the leader of the English *utilitarian* school, applied its teaching to the promotion of public prosperity.

### III. BERKELEY (1684-1752).

Berkeley, an Anglican Bishop, was educated in the school of Locke. His intentions were good. Whilst some carried out Locke's system into *Materialism*, he undertook to deduce *Spiritualism* from it in the following way.

Accepting the principle then unusually admitted, that all human knowledge must be reduced to an aggregate of sensations, he observed that the sensations can have no existence except in the being which is sensible of them, and of which they are so many modifications. The sensations then do not exist outside of man, but only in man, in the human soul.

It follows, therefore, that if man knows nothing



beyond his own sensations, the objects of his knowledge are not outside him, but exist only in his own soul as modifications of his own spirit. Consequently the whole external world exists merely in appearance; it consists only of sensations which manifest themselves in the soul as modifications of itself.

This system, which denies the *external existence* of bodies, leaving nothing in existence but spirit, is termed *Idealism*.

Berkeley applied his system to the analysis of bodies. He goes over all the qualities we attribute to bodies, and shows that they are only certain sensations experienced by ourselves. He thence concludes that our whole knowledge of bodies consists in an aggregate of sensations, and that what we term *the qualities of bodies* exist not as is commonly supposed in the bodies themselves, or outside of us, but in ourselves only.

Whence then do we get the sensations? This question is proposed by Berkeley in his celebrated *Dialogues of Philonous and Fhilylas*. He replies that they are produced immediately by God in the human soul. He shows by the example of dreams that there is no need for the presence of corporeal objects in order to our acquiring the persuasion of their presence, the feeling of their presence is sufficient. Thus, according to Berkeley, human life is a continuous dream, with this difference only, that in life the several sensations have an harmonious and constant connection one with

another ; whereas in dreams they take place without this harmony and constancy—the visual sensations and images, for example, having no correspondence with those of touch.

#### IV. HUME (1711-1776).

Hume also was educated in the school of Locke. He accepted as certain, without examination, the principle that all human cognitions may be reduced to sensation. But, whilst Berkeley had arrived by this principle at *Idealism*, Hume, on the other hand, arrived at *Scepticism*, or the system which denies all certainty to human cognitions.

He said, human reasoning is based on the *principle of cause*, which is thus expressed : “ Here is an effect, therefore there must be a cause.” But this principle, he continued, is false and illusory, for man knows nothing but his sensations, and a sensation can never be a cause of any thing.

In fact, a cause is such only in so far as it acts—it is an active entity. But a sensation is not an entity ; it is the modification of an entity ; it is not active but passive, therefore a sensation can not be a cause.

But we know nothing except our sensations, we can, therefore, know nothing about cause. What we term “ cause and effect ” are only antecedent and subsequent sensations, and we reason falsely when we assume that the sensation which precedes is the cause of that which follows. The argument *post hoc ergo propter hoc* is false reasoning ;

therefore whenever we speak of beings as causes of effects in the sensible world, we attempt the impossible, for it is certainly impossible to proceed from sensations to the knowledge of any cause whatever.

The impiety of this system is manifest, since by denying or doubting the principle of cause, we deny or doubt the existence of the first cause—God Himself.

#### V. REID (1710-1796).

The disastrous consequences deduced by two such powerful minds as Berkeley and Hume from the principles of Locke, aroused and alarmed the Scottish philosopher Reid. He saw that these consequences annihilated the external world, and destroyed all certainty of human cognitions with such rigour of logic, that, by granting the premises, no escape was possible from the conclusion.

But on the other hand he saw that these consequences were opposed to the common sense of mankind, and destroyed all morality and religion. Therefore he said, "They can not be true."

The conclusion, therefore, of Reid was that the premises were false, and that Locke's system must not be accepted blindly, but must be submitted to a profound re-examination in order to detect the falsehood which lay at its root.

He set to work on this investigation with all the force of his genius, and in the end was convinced that he had succeeded.

Reid observed that in the fact of human perception there is something besides simple sensation. If it were true that man knows nothing beyond his sensations he would be able to affirm nothing beyond them. But experience shows us that we affirm the existence of *real beings* which are not our sensations; since we are conscious of knowing not only the modifications of our own spirit, but also the *substances* which are not ourselves, and which exercise an action upon us. We must, therefore, conclude that we have not only the faculty of sensation, but another mysterious faculty as well, and that whenever we experience a sensation it is this which excites and compels us to affirm the existence of something outside of the sensation.

But here the Scottish philosopher found himself confronted by the following difficulties, which form the great knot of the ideological problem.

How can we explain this faculty which affirms that which we do not find in the sensation?

The object of this faculty is not given by sensation. Where then does it reside—what presents it to our perception?

Reid endeavoured to meet the difficulties thus: he said, "We must not go beyond our facts. Now it is attested by fact that we perceive substance and *being*, things which do not fall under our senses, which are entirely different from sensations, but which we perceive on occasion of the sensations. We must therefore admit that the human

soul has of its own nature an *instinct* which leads us to this perception. This instinct is a primitive faculty which must be accepted as an ultimate and inexplicable fact."

According to Reid, then, there is in us a *suggestion of nature*, as he terms it, by which on experiencing the sensations we are necessitated not to stop there, but to pass beyond them by an act of thought, to the persuasion of the *existence of real beings*, which are the *causes of our sensations*, and to which we give the name of *bodies*.

By means of this primitive faculty, which affirms or perceives the corporeal substance itself, Reid thought he had confuted the *Idealism* of Berkeley, and secured the existence of bodies. He thought also that by placing the criterion of certitude in this same primitive faculty, he had given its death-blow to the Scepticism of Hume. He imagined that he had thus reconciled philosophy with the common sense of mankind, from which it had been divorced by the English philosophers.

The merit of the thinkers of the Scottish school consists in this, that they were the first who attempted to liberate philosophy from the sensistic principles of Locke and Condillac.

## VI. KANT (1724-1800).

Whilst it was supposed that the Scottish school had placed philosophy once for all on a solid basis, the celebrated Sophist of Königsberg came and shattered its foundations again, and worse than

before. He took the author of the Scottish school at his word, and proceeded to reason with him much as follows: "You are quite right in saying that our persuasion of the existence of bodies does not come from the sense, but from a totally different faculty. The human spirit is by its very nature obliged to affirm the existence of bodies when our sensitive faculty experiences sensations. If so, our faith in the existence of bodies is an effect of the nature of the human mind, and hence if our mind were differently constituted we should not be necessitated to affirm that bodies exist. Therefore the truth of the existence of bodies is *subjective* or relative to the mind that pronounces it, but it is not in any way *objective*. We are indeed obliged to admit the existence of bodies, because we are so constituted that we cannot resist this instinct of our nature; but it does not by any means follow that these bodies exist in themselves—that they have an objective existence independent of us."

This reasoning was extended by Kant to all human cognitions in general. He maintained that since they are all and each acts and products of the human spirit, and this spirit can never go out of itself, so there can be nothing but *subjective* truth and certainty, and therefore we can never be sure that things are such as they appear.

To support this reasoning he observed that as all beings act according to the laws of their nature, so their products bear the stamp of those laws, whence he concluded that since our cognitions are

all products of our own spirit, they must necessarily be in conformity with its nature and laws.

"Who can tell," he says, "that if there were a mind constituted differently from our own, it would not see things quite differently from what they appear to us? Does not a mirror reflect objects according to the form which these objects assume in it, a convex mirror showing them elongated, a concave mirror on the contrary making them appear shortened."

"The human mind therefore," he continues, "gives its own *forms* to the objects of its cognitions, it does not receive those forms from the objects themselves. Now the office of the philosopher consists in discovering what these forms are, in enumerating them one by one, and in defining each according to its proper limitations. For this all that is *required* is accurately to observe all the objects of human cognition, transferring the forms of such objects to the human mind itself, and thus getting rid of the *transcendental* illusion, which leads us to imagine that the forms belong to the objects, whilst they are actually the forms of our own mind."

This task Kant undertook to accomplish in his work, which bears the title of *A Critique of Pure Reason*. His method is as follows.

The *Sensitivity*, according to Kant, has two forms. The one he assigns to the external sense, and he terms it *space*, the other to the internal sense, and he calls this *time*. To the *understanding*

he assigns four forms, *quantity, quality, modality,* and *relation* ; to the *reason* he gives three forms—namely, *absolute matter, absolute whole, absolute spirit* ; in other words, matter, the universe, and God.

By this method Kant professed to reconcile all the most opposite systems of philosophy. Of these he makes two grand divisions, the *Dogmatic* and the *Sceptical*. Under the *Dogmatic* he includes all that admitted the truth and certainty of human cognitions. Under the *Sceptical* those that denied them. He said that both sides were in the right ; that the Dogmatists were so, because a truth and certainty existed—namely, the subjective or relative ; and that the Sceptics too were right, because there is no such thing as objective truth or certainty in the objects considered in themselves, since man cannot know anything as it is in itself.

This system Kant termed *Criticism*, because it criticised not only all previous systems, but human reason itself. He also called it *Transcendental* Philosophy, because it transcended sense and experience, and subjected to its criticism all that man believed himself to know about the sensible world.

The system of Kant, however, is in fact :

1. *Sceptical*, because the subjective truth and certainty which he admits cannot, except by an abuse of words, be called either truth or certainty.
2. *Idealistic*, since it admits only the subjective existence of bodies, and declares them to be the



mere product of instinct and the innate forms of the human mind. It admits bodies only in appearance, and denies their proper existence. Moreover, his system is idealism, transported from the *particular* to the *general*. It is the idealism which Berkeley had applied to bodies only, extended by Kant, no less than by Hume before him, to all the objects of human cognition, whether corporeal or spiritual, concrete or abstract.

3. *Atheistic*, because if human reason cannot give us security of the absolute and objective truth of the objects presented to our perception, there is no possibility of knowing with certainty the existence of God, and God is reduced to a subjective phenomenon. Kant himself admits this with perfect frankness. In fact, he criticises all the arguments employed by philosophers to demonstrate the existence of God, and proves, as he thinks, that they are futile and useless.

4. *Pantheistic*, because according to this system nothing is left but spirit, which produces and figures to itself all things, in virtue of its inherent instincts and innate forms. It follows that one only substance exists, which is the human subject itself, and which carries within it the whole universe and God Himself; so that God, in this system, becomes a modification of man.

5. *Spiritualistic* and *Materialistic* at once, because what we call *matter* is in the *object man* as a product of himself, and what we call *spirit* is also in the *object man* as producing and modifying him,

so that the human spirit becomes at one and the same time *spirit* and *matter*.

## VII. FICHTE (1762-1814).

Fichte was a disciple of Kant. When he published his work *The Science of Cognition (Wissenschaftslehre)*, he intended to give a scientific explanation of the system of Kant. But Kant repudiated the explanation, and thus Fichte became aware that he had invented a new system of his own.

The difference between the *Critical Philosophy* and *Transcendental Idealism*, as Fichte termed his system, is as follows :

Although Kant held that we have no means of knowing whether the objects which appear to us are actually such as they appear, he did not deny the possibility of this being the case: that they may have a mode of existence independent of us, although we have no means of ascertaining it. But Fichte went further and denied that this was possible. He moreover maintained that these objects could be nothing but the product of the human spirit. He argued thus: the objects of cognition are all the products of the act of cognition, but the act of cognition is a product of the human spirit, therefore the objects of cognition are also products of our own spirit. These objects, he continued, may be reduced to the sensible universe, God, and ourselves. Therefore the universe, God, and ourselves, are only so many pro-

ducts of our own spirit, which places them before it as objects of its cognition.

Fichte then goes on to explain how the human spirit produces from itself all these things. He says that with the first pronouncement or creation the *Ego* posits itself. Before man says *Ego*, he is not as yet under the form of *Ego*. By a second pronouncement man, the *Ego*, posits the *non-Ego*, or creates it. The *non-Ego*, according to Fichte, is all that is not *Ego*, that is to say the external world, the divinity, and all objects of human thought whatsoever. Now these two acts by which our spirit posits the *Ego* and the *non-Ego* are co-relatives, so that the one cannot stand without the other. The human spirit cannot pronounce itself without contrasting this *self* with what is different from *itself*, by which act it denies this to be itself, and thus differentiates itself from all the rest. It cannot pronounce the *non-Ego* without contrasting it with the *Ego*, and finding it to be different from itself.

This double creation of the *Ego* and *non-Ego* is according to Fichte the first operation of the human spirit, which he also terms *intuition*. It has two relations or terms, which are in mutual contrast and opposition. By this first mysterious operation he thinks he has explained not only the origin of human cognition, but the existence of all things as well; for, since the *non-Ego* includes all that is not the *Ego*, it includes God as well as the external world, and thus he arrives at the absurd

proposition that not only the external world but even God Himself is a creation of man.

This system is termed *Transcendental Idealism*, because it applies the idealistic principle of Berkeley to all things without exception, drawing forth with an inexorable logic all its consequences, and discovering the abyss concealed beneath. The *critical Philosophy* of Kant left a doubt whether or not things had a subsistence of their own; this was decided by Fichte in the negative; he thus changed the *critical Scepticism* of Kant into *dogmatic Scepticism*.

From Fichte's system were originated in Germany the two others: *Schelling's system of absolute identity*, and *Hegel's of the absolute idea*, but we omit their exposition as unnecessary for our present purpose.

#### VIII. CRITIQUE OF THE ABOVE SYSTEMS.

The observations of Reid on the subject of the Sensism of Locke and Condillac, Berkeley and Hume, were perfectly just, being founded on a more complete study of the phenomena of the human spirit.

He said, if man had no other faculty but that of sensation, he would *feel* only, but he would never *think*. Thought is something beyond sensation, for we think of what we do not feel; we arrive at substance, for example, at cause and spirit by thought, yet they do not fall under our senses. Therefore the objects of human thought are not

merely simple sensations. However evident the fact may be it is difficult to understand *how* it is. It is still more difficult to understand, though equally evident, that we *think* of the sensations in a way very different from that in which we *feel* the sensation itself. Our mind, in fact, affirms the sensation in itself, and this indifferently whether it is actually present, or past, or future. For example, I think of the pleasant odour of the rose I experienced yesterday; the sensation itself is no longer present, but the thought of it remains. Therefore "the sensation" itself is not the same thing as "the thought of the sensation."

We may say the same as to future sensations. I think over the pleasant sensations I expect tomorrow in the chase or at a banquet. The sensations do not yet exist, yet the thought of them is present. *Thought* therefore differs essentially from *sensation*. This being the case, I am bound to conclude that even when the sensation and the thought of the sensation are both present at the same time, they not only differ essentially, but are independent of one another.

Moreover, who has not observed how many times we experience sensations without thinking of them, especially if they are not very vivid or are habitual and manifold, such as we experience in every moment of our existence. They pass unobserved, our mind, particularly if distracted or otherwise occupied, has not time to reflect upon them. We can therefore easily understand that

there are beings which are purely sensitive, and others in whom thought is united with sensation ; the first are those that have brute animal life, the second are human beings. This distinction once admitted demolishes the fundamental principle of Locke and his followers. Locke confounded sensation with thought, and attempted to apply to thought what actually applied to sensation only.

*The True Nature of Thought.*

So far Reid was in the right in dealing with the Sensists, but in attempting to confute the Sceptics he found himself stranded. For, seeing the necessity of basing philosophy on thought, and of giving a satisfactory explanation of the phenomena of thought, and seeing that these could in no way be accounted for by the senses only, he boldly took the line of declaring that they were to be attributed to a particular and essential instinct of human nature. In this he took notice of the *subjective* part of thought only, entirely losing sight of its *objective* element, and so failed to grasp the true nature of thought itself. For it is of the nature of thought that there is always present to the subject, an object which can never be confounded with the subject, but on the contrary is constantly distinguished from it ; and in this continual and necessary distinction the thought itself consists, so that if ever the object were confounded with the subject, thought would thereby cease to exist.

This error or omission of Reid was taken advan-

tage of by Kant, thence to raise doubts, not merely as to the existence of bodies, but as to all the objects of human cognition, all of which he maintains are only products, as we have already seen, of an irresistible instinct of human nature, and, therefore, mere subjective creations of the human spirit. The transcendental Idealism of Fichte is nothing but a logical complement of the system of Kant.

We may expose the error of Kant, which was at the root of many other errors and of German Pantheism, by the following reasoning: "I know that I am not the object of my thought, and that the object of my thought is not myself. Thus I know that I am not the bread that I eat, the sun which I behold, the person with whom I converse. This is self-evident, because I am so known to myself that if I were not so known I should no longer be. Therefore nothing can be *me* without my knowing it. But I do not know that the bread, the sun, the person I converse with are myself. Therefore I know that they are not myself."

Kant could only reply to this that we are deceived, and that things might easily be ourselves without our knowing it. But this could not be, for if I did not know it I should not be myself, since the *Ego* implies the consciousness of myself. Without this consciousness of self the *Ego* would not be *Ego* but something else. Therefore the objects which stand before my thought are essentially distinct from myself. For the same reason they cannot be

modifications of myself, because if so they would exist in my consciousness as modifications of myself, since the nature of the *Ego* consists in this consciousness of myself.

*The Bridge of Communication between ourselves  
and the external objects.*

But the Idealists object: What then is "the bridge of communication between the *Ego*, myself, and the objects of the *Ego*? Can the *Ego* go out of itself so as to reach a thing outside itself?"

To this we reply, that however difficult the question may be, even though it were found inexplicable, this would in no way weaken our assertion of a fact already fully verified. Sound logic demands that when we have a verified fact before us it is not to be given up because we do not know how to explain it. The only conclusion is that we have to admit our ignorance. This, however, is not our present position.

Reflection on this matter will show that this objection arises from what we may call a certain *materialistic ontology*, which leads our Idealists to apply to all being, whether spiritual or corporeal, the laws which belong to matter only. For example, a law of corporeal beings is the impenetrability of bodies, so that one body cannot stand in the place occupied by another. But how do we know that this law holds good for incorporeal beings or spirits? There is no reason why spirits should not be subject to wholly different laws, and



this, in fact, is what we might expect from the difference between the nature of body and that of spirit.

How then can we judge of this latter nature ?

Certainly not by arguing from the analogy of bodies, but by observing and well considering what spirits are in themselves. Now if we observe and consider well this intelligent spirit of ours, and its actual and passive qualities, we come clearly to see that it obeys a totally opposite law from that which governs bodies, and that far from our being able to say that it is impenetrable in its nature, we find that the objects of thought may exist in it, not merely without being confounded with it, but whilst remaining perfectly distinct and different from it. The very word "*object*" used in common parlance expresses this fact by its very etymology, meaning something set opposite—*objectum*. Such is the result of observation, and since it involves no absurdity it ought to be accepted. There is no need then of any bridge of communication between our spirit and external things, since this may be found immediately in the spirit according to that immaterial mode which we call *cognition* or *knowledge*.

A consideration of the order of things sensible will lead us to a similar reflection if we regard the soul as the sensitive principle. Now no true principle can exist as such without having a sensible *term*, or something which it feels. We do not call this an *object*, but a *term*, reserving the former

word for the intellectual order only. Every sensitive principle, therefore, has a term which it feels.

Now it is a fact of experience that the term which is felt remains always in the sentient principle, and cannot go out of or beyond it. It is also a fact of experience that the thing *felt* is not the principle that *feels*. Now under the denomination of the thing felt or sensible term are included all sensible things without exception.

From these undeniable facts there flow two consequences: the first, that the *sensible* things or things felt can never be confounded with the *sensitive* principle or principle which feels them, and this is enough to refute completely the Idealism of Berkeley; the second is that which Galluppi has well remarked—namely, that the sense affirms and perceives the external things immediately without needing any bridge of communication whatever.

These considerations prove conclusively that the systems of Kant and Fichte are based on an incomplete observation of nature, which led these philosophers to confound together two diametrically opposite things—namely, the “*subject*” or knower and the “*object*” or thing known; the “*principle*” that *feels* and the “*term*” *felt*.

#### OUR OWN SYSTEM.

##### 1. *Distinction Between Subject and Object.*

It is clear, then, from what we have already said that the *object known* is a thing entirely different from the *subject or knower*.

The subject that knows is a person, the object, as such, is impersonal. Sometimes, however we may say that in a certain sense the object known is a subject that knows, when, for instance, the object of thought is man; sometimes also the subject that knows is itself the object known, as when we think of ourselves. But the *subject that knows* can never, *as such*, be confounded or mixed up with *the object known*. Always and in every case the *subject* and the *object* retain their respective natures, each remaining perfectly distinct from the other, so distinct that if it were otherwise our knowledge itself would be extinguished. The distinction between *subject* and *object* is therefore an essential characteristic of cognition.

The question, therefore, is reduced to this: Whence does our understanding obtain its object?

Human cognitions are divided into two classes, *intuitions* and *affirmations*.

Intuitional knowledge or cognition is that which regards *the things*, as considered in themselves, *the things* in their possibility. The things considered in themselves as possible to subsist or not to subsist are the ideas.

Cognition obtained by means of affirmation or judgment is that knowledge which we acquire by affirming or judging that a thing subsists or does not subsist.

From this description the following consequences spring:

1. That the cognitions by *intuition* necessarily

precede those of *affirmation*, for we can not affirm that a thing subsists or does not subsist unless we first know the thing itself as possible to subsist; for example, I can not say that a tree or a man subsists unless I first know what a tree or a man is. Now to know what a thing is comes to the same as to know the thing in its possibility, for I may know what a tree is and yet not know that this tree as yet subsists.

2. That the *objects* as *known* all belong to intuitional knowledge, because affirmation is limited to affirming or denying the subsistence of the object as known by *intuition*. *Affirmation*, therefore, does not furnish any new object to the mind, but only pronounces the subsistence of the object already known. *Intuition*, therefore, places us in possession of possible objects, and these we call *ideas*. *Affirmation* does not furnish us with new possible objects, or new ideas, but produces persuasions in respect of the objects which we know already.

There are, therefore, cognitions which terminate in ideas, and cognitions which terminate in persuasions. By the first we know the possible world, by the second the real and subsistent world.. Hence there are two categories of things—things *possible* and things *subsistent*, in other words *ideas* and *things*.

2. *Ideas are not nothing. They have a mode of existence proper to themselves.*

We have seen that the *objects* of our cognitions are essentially distinct from ourselves, who are the subjects of the cognitions. This distinction of the *object* from the subject of cognition is proper to all objects whatever, whether they are only possible (*ideas*) or are also subsistent (*things*). But not only are all such objects distinct from the cognising subject, they are also independent of it. By this observation a new light is thrown on the nature of ideas, for they compel us to conclude by the logic of facts:

1st. That *ideas* are not *nothing*.

2nd. That they are not *ourselves* or any modification of ourselves.

3rd. That they have a mode of existence of their own, entirely different from that of *real* or *subsistent* things.

This mode of existence belonging to the ideal objects or ideas is such that it does not fall under our bodily sense, and hence it is that it has entirely escaped the observation of many philosophers, who began their philosophical investigations with a foregone conclusion, or assumption that whatever did not fall under our senses was nothing. Yet it is a fact that though the possible objects truly exist they do not fall under sense, and hence that we can in no way account for them by recurring to corporeal sense only; which is a fresh and self-evident confutation of *sensism*.

### 3. *Principal characteristics of ideas.*

But if ideas, or, in other words, the ideal and possible objects, are not furnished by the senses, whence then do they come?

Let us begin by examining the essential characteristics of ideas. These are principally two—namely, *universality* and *necessity*.

An ideal object or one that is merely possible, is always universal, in this sense, that taken by itself it enables us to know the nature of all the indefinite number of individuals in which it is or may be realized. Take, for example, the idea of man. The *idea of man* is the same as the *ideal man*. Whatever be the number of human individuals in whom this idea may be realized there is always the same nature of man; that nature is one, the individuals are many.

Now what does the idea of man, or the ideal man express and make us know? The nature of man. Whoever, therefore, possesses the idea of man, if he had the power of creation, would be able by this alone to produce as many human individuals as he pleased. In the same way this one idea is sufficient to enable us to discern all men who may ever come into existence. So also a sculptor who had conceived the idea of a statue, would be able to reproduce it in marble as many times as he pleased, without the idea being ever exhausted. The ideal statue would remain one and always the same, standing before the mind as the exemplar; the

material copies would be many, all formed and made known by means of this same idea. This is what is meant by the *universality* of ideas, by which they are categorically distinguished from the real objects which are always particular, and from the sensations which are also particular.

The characteristic of *necessity* is equally evident, because the ideas being possible objects, it is clear that what is possible can never have been otherwise than possible, and hence it is such, necessarily. The possible is that which involves no contradiction; every object, therefore, which involves no contradiction is necessarily possible. Now all finite and real beings considered in their reality are contingent only and not necessary, in contradiction to possible beings. For we may think of any finite or real being whatsoever as existing or not existing, whereas we can not think of the possible object ceasing to be possible, that is to say, becoming not possible. For example, man in his possibility is necessary, for you can not make man an impossible being; on the contrary, a real man is always a contingent being, because he may or may not be.

*Universality*, therefore, and necessity are the two principal characteristics of the ideas. These include two others—namely, *infinity* and *eternity*.

An infinity is necessarily involved in ideas, by reason of their universality. No real and limited being is universal. For by reason of its very limits it is determined within itself and incommunicable

to any other being. Hence ideas do not belong to the class of real limited beings.

Ideas are also eternal, because they are necessary; for that which is necessary always was and always will be necessary, and that which always is and always was is eternal.

4. *The ideas exist in God from all eternity.*

It was the consideration of these sublime characteristics of the ideas that led Plato and after him S. Augustine and S. Thomas to conclude that the ideas reside in God\* as their source and principle.

From this opinion Malebranche deduced his system that man, as well as every other finite intelligence, sees all that he does see in God. This system was afterwards defended from the imputations against its theological orthodoxy by Cardinal Gerdil.

We do not entirely accept this system, for reasons too long to enter upon here, but we recognise in it a foundation of truth, and we say in general that the differences between our system and that of Malebranche lies not in fundamentals but in details.

\* *Ideæ sunt principales quædam formæ vel rationes rerum stabiles atque incommutabiles: quia ipsæ formatæ non sunt, ac per hoc æternæ: ac semper eodem modo se habentes, quia divina intelligentia continentur.*—S. Thomas Summ., theol II., p. 9, xx., act 2, *et passim*.



5. *Important distinction of ideas in God and in man.*

We are very particular in distinguishing the ideas as they are in God and as seen by our intelligence. The ideas are in God in a different mode from that in which they are displayed to our mind. The ideas in God have a mode of existence which differs in nothing from that of God Himself, and this is the mode of the Divine Word; Who is with God without any real distinction in Himself, and is God Himself. This is not the case with the ideas as exhibited to our mind.

In our mind the ideas are many and do not constitute by themselves the word of man, because the word is the expression of a judgment or affirmation or pronouncement, which has its term always in a reality, whereas the ideas only cause us to know the *possibility* of a reality. Hence the ideas are limited by the human mind which receives them in such a way that they can not receive the appellation of God or the Divine Word, because God is the Real absolute Being Who subsists necessarily; whereas the ideas are only possibles, that is possible real beings of which we have the intuition. And yet the ideas retain certain divine characteristics, such as we have stated above, so that we may with propriety term them *appurtenances* of God.

Hence, speaking generally, we may say that the origin of the ideas comes from God, Who causes them to shine before the human mind; nor can they come to man from the external things, be-

cause finite beings possess none of those sublime characteristics, and nothing can impart what it does not possess.

6. *Classification of the ideas. The one indeterminate idea and the determinate ideas—concrete and abstract ideas.*

We may now advance a step further towards discovering the origin of human ideas, explaining their multiplicity, and showing how they concur in the production of that class of cognitions which are termed cognitions by *persuasion*.

We will begin by classifying the ideas according to the order of subordination in which they stand to one another. We find, therefore, that there is one idea, which is the only indeterminate and wholly universal idea, and this is the idea of *being* or *existence*. All the other ideas are more or less determinate, and give us the knowledge of possible beings within a more restricted area.

Now, between the indeterminate idea of *being* or *existence* and all the other ideas, there exists this relation, that all the other ideas contain the indeterminate idea of *being*, to which different determinations are super-added. Take, for instance, the ideas of stone, tree, animal, man.

How do I get the idea of stone? It is a being, but not any kind of being, but one which has the determinations of stone.

How do I get the idea of tree? It is a being with the determination of tree.

How do I get the idea of animal? Again, it is a being which has the determination of animal.

How do I get the idea of man? Still we have a being with the determination proper to man.

We find, therefore, that being enters into all our ideas, and every determinate idea is nothing but this same idea of *being*, invested with and limited by certain determinations. All the ideas, therefore, have the same basis, one common element, which is ideal or possible *being*.

These determinations of the idea of *being* may be more or less complete, that is to say, they may determine *being* entirely, or determine it only on one side, leaving the other sides undetermined.

Thus, for example, I may form the idea of a book of a certain size and shape, printed in a certain type, and in fact furnished with all the other accidental determinations of a given book. This is the determinate idea of a book, and nevertheless this idea is still general, because it is a pure idea, not a real book; it is a type or exemplar which I have before my mind, and according to this type I might form an indefinite number of real books all precisely alike. On the other hand, I may have the idea of a book to a certain extent indeterminate, as when I think of a book with all that constitutes its essence, prescindng from the accidents of size, shape, type, etc. Now when the ideas are all fully or perfectly determined we call them *concrete* ideas; when they remain to a certain extent indeterminate we call them *abstract*. But if

from the idea of book I take away all its determinations, as well accidental as essential, the idea of book vanishes from my mind, and nothing remains but the idea of indeterminate *being*.

Thus the ideas take as it were the form of a pyramid. The first course in the structure is formed of the concrete and wholly determinate ideas, and these are necessarily the most numerous. The other courses consist of the less determinate ideas, which diminish in proportion as we divest them of their determinations. The apex of the pyramid consists of the idea of *being* which alone is without determinations.

If then we wish to give a satisfactory explanation of the origin of ideas we must account for two things—first, the indeterminate idea; and second, its determinations.

### 7. *Formation of determinate ideas.*

As regards the determinations of the idea of *being* (which is itself the indeterminate idea), we shall easily discover their origin by the following consideration.

Let us suppose that man is possessed of the idea of *being*, that is to say, that he knows what being or existence is, we see at once how the idea may be exchanged for the sensation. Because when we experience sensations we may say to ourselves, this is a being limited and determined by the sensation. For example, when I see a star I may say mentally, this is a luminous being, and the like.

The sensations, therefore, furnish me with the first determinations of being, so that when I think of a luminous being acting upon my organ of sight, I no longer think of indeterminate being only, but of a being with the determination of luminosity of a certain degree of luminous intensity, of a determinate size and shape, etc. All these qualities make the idea determinate, and are all furnished by the senses. But it does not follow that these determinations of the idea are the sensations themselves. This we shall see if we distinguish the different operations which take place in the formation of these perceptions.

In fact, when on beholding a star we say to ourselves, this is a luminous being, we pronounce an affirmation or judgment. We have already shown the distinction between cognitions by affirmation and simple ideas. But we have said also that the first of these depend on the latter, so that we can not affirm the subsistence of an object, unless we first have the idea of it. Therefore, in the judgment by which we affirm the star as present before our eyes, and which we term the *perception* of the star, the idea of it is already contained. We have then to perform another mental operation by isolating the idea from all the other elements of the perception. This operation is termed *universalization*, and it is thus performed :

When I perceive the star, my thought is bound up with a particular and sensible object. But I can free it from this by abstracting entirely from

the thought of the actual subsistence of the star, retaining the image of it in my mind, and considering it as a possible star, as type and exemplar of all such stars, indefinite as to their number, which might be realized by creative power. Now the possible star is a pure determinate idea.

This determinate idea is no longer the sensation; for this is real not possible, yet it is true that the sensation was the *occasion* of my discovering it. It was discovered by my *intelligence*, by considering as *possible* that which my sensation gave me as *real*. And this my intelligence was well able to do, if we suppose it to know what possible *being* is. But the possible star is *universal*, that is to say it may be realized an indefinite number of times, and this operation of our intelligence is, therefore, termed *universalization*.

By *Universalization*, therefore, we form the ideas which are completely determined; by *abstraction* we form those which are determined only to a certain extent, but otherwise are undetermined. Thus, supposing that, besides abstracting from the subsistence of the star, I abstract also from its size and form, its degree of luminosity, and other accidents, what remains before my mind? I have still the idea of star, but this idea is abstract or generic, equally applicable to a star of the first, second, or third magnitude. This idea, then, is partly determinate, because the idea of star could not be confounded with the idea of anything else; but it is also in part indeterminate, because

it does not apply more to one star than to another.

If then the human mind is possessed of the idea of possible being, there is no difficulty in finding how it gets the determinations which, as it were, clothe the limit, and transform it into all the other ideas. These determinations are occasioned and materially furnished by the sensations, and afterwards formed into ideas by means of the twofold operations above described—namely, *universalization* and *abstraction*.

8. *Origin of the one indeterminate idea—The idea of being or existence.*

It remains still to explain whence comes the idea of *being*, the sole indeterminate idea. If we once admit that this idea is *given* to the human spirit, there is no difficulty as to the origin of the other ideas, because, as we have seen, these are nothing else but that same idea of being invested with determinations by the human spirit, on occasion of the sensations, and of whatever feelings man experiences.

Now in order to solve the problem as to the origin in our mind of the idea of *being* we must first of all consider certain corollaries which follow from what we have explained above.

1st. The idea of being in general precedes all other ideas. In fact, all other ideas are only the idea of being determined in one way or another,

and to determine a thing supposes that we already possess the thing to be determined.

2nd. This idea can not come from sensation or from our feelings, not only because the sensations are real, particular and contingent (whereas this idea furnishes the mind with the knowledge of possible being, universal and necessary in its possibility), but also because the sensations and the feelings do not furnish to the spirit any thing except determinations of the idea of being by which it is limited and restricted.

3rd. It can not come from the operations of the human spirit, such as universalization and abstraction; because these operations do no more than either add determinations to this same idea of *being*, or take them away when they have been added, and this *on occasion* of the sensations or feelings experienced.

4th. The operations of the human intelligence are only possible, if we presuppose the idea of being, which is the means, the instrument, employed by it to perform them, nay, the very condition of its existence.

5th. It follows that without the idea of being the human spirit could not only make no rational operation, but would be altogether destitute of the faculty of thought and understanding, in other words it would not be intelligent.

6th. If the human spirit were deprived of the idea of being it would be deprived also of intelligence; it follows that it is this idea which con-



stitutes it intelligent. We may therefore say that it is this same idea which constitutes the light of reason, and we thus discover what that light of reason is which has been admitted by all men, but defined by no one.

7th. And since philosophers give the name of *form* to that which constitutes a thing what it is, the idea of *being* in general may be rightly termed the form of the human reason or intelligence.

8th. For the same reason this idea may justly be called the *first* or *parent idea*, the idea *in se* and the *light* of the intelligence.

It is the *first* idea because anterior to all other ideas; the *parent* idea because it generates all the others, by associating itself with the sensations and feelings by means of the operations of the human spirit. We call it the idea *in se*, because the feelings and sensations are not ideas, and our spirit is obliged to add them as so many determinations to that first idea, in order to obtain the determinate ideas.

Lastly, we call it the light of the intelligence, because it is cognizable by itself; whereas the sensations and feelings are cognizable by means of it, by becoming its determinations, and, as such, being rendered cognizable to the human spirit.

If these facts are attentively considered, the great problem of the origin of ideas and of all human cognitions becomes easy of solution.

But in fact this problem has been solved long ago by the common sense of mankind. For the

existence in the human spirit of a *light* of *reason* or intelligence is admitted by the common sense of men, which declares this light of reason to be so natural and proper to man that it constitutes the difference between him and the brutes.

Now since we have shown that this light of reason is nothing else but the idea of *being* in general, it follows according to the testimony of the same common sense that this idea is natural to man or proper to his nature, and therefore it is not an idea which is formed or acquired but innate, or inserted in man by nature, and presented to the spirit by the Creator Himself, by Whom man was formed.

In fact, *being* must be known of itself, or otherwise there is nothing else which could make it known; but on the contrary every other thing is known only by means of it, for since every thing else is some mode or determination of *being*, if we know not what *being* itself is, we can know nothing.\*

9. *Immortality of the soul. Existence of God.*

Such is our solution of the question of the origin of ideas. For all ideas, whether specific

\* S. Thomas has said of the light of reason, the idea of being, according to Rosmini. "*Omnia dicimur in Deo videre, et secundum ipsum de omnibus judicare, in quantum, per participationem sui luminis omnia cognoscimus et dijudicamus. Nam et ipsum lumen naturale rationis participatio quædam est divini luminis, sicut etiam omnia sensibilia dicimur videre et judicare in sole, id est in lumine solis.*"—I. 1. d. 9, xii., art xii. ad 3.